



**Training Partnerships for Prevention, Protection and Preparedness:  
A Conference to Build Stronger Partnerships On Disaster Response Training**

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**MEETING NOTES FROM EPA PLENARY PANEL**

**Friday, April 23**

**EPA Plenary Panel**

*Moderator: Chip Hughes*

Chip Hughes from NIEHS was the moderator for the EPA Plenary and began the session by briefly outlining the topics to be presented. Specifically, he said that the panelists would review the role of the National Response Team (NRT), EPA's participation on the team, and the changes anticipated under the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

John Gustafson, Executive Director of the NRT, gave an overview of the NRT and its role in the National Response System (NRS). He first explained that response planning and coordination is accomplished at the federal level through NRT, which is comprised of the Response, Preparedness, and Science and Technology committees. More specifically, the NRT does not respond directly to incidents, rather, it is responsible for three major activities related to managing responses: (1) distributing information; (2) planning for emergencies; and (3) training for emergencies.

Following major incidents, the NRT assesses the effectiveness of the response. The NRT may use information gathered from the assessment to make recommendations for improving the National Contingency Plan and the National Response System (NRS) which is comprised of the NRT, regional response teams, federal on-scene coordinators, and state and local governments. Mr. Gustafson then detailed the NRS response process and the plans supporting it (these can be viewed in the respective PowerPoint presentation).

Mr. Gustafson continued with a discussion of the NRT recommended priorities for 2004. These priorities include: implementation of Homeland Security Initiatives; improvements in worker health and safety protection; information management; the advance of environmental missions; law enforcement, and; awareness of NRT structure and roles. He then provided a more detailed description of the worker health and safety priority. This recommendation calls for support of the NRP health and safety annex; continued clarification of OSHA's role in response; improved worker health and safety protection; consideration of next step reports on worker safety and health, and; improved protective action decision-making information. Mr. Gustafson concluded his presentation with a description of the NRT's training subcommittee that helps with interagency training coordination and hospital hazmat training. For more information on NRT please visit: [www.nrt.org](http://www.nrt.org).

The second presenter, Mark Mjonness, Director of the EPA Response Operations Center (OEPPR), highlighted the importance of linking training exercises and national contingency plans (NCP). He first explained that NCPs are regulations developed to ensure that the resources and expertise of the federal government are available immediately for oil or hazardous substance releases that are beyond the capabilities of local and state responders. Mr. Mjonness then emphasized that all emergency response programs should be consistent with one another. OEPPR developed 10 elements/criteria to measure the consistencies amongst programs, with two of these criteria addressing worker training and safety and health. Another item that the OEPPR recognized was the need for the EPA to branch out to muster agency resources and to be ready for simultaneous disasters. Nine priority areas were established to meet this objective.

To enhance EPA's involvement with worker health and safety, and to become more integrated in the incident command system (ICS), Mr. Mjonness noted recommendations for the EPA to develop a manual with guidance on new threats, to implement critical management teams and on-site coordinators, and to track health and safety training requirements. This would help the EPA to become more of a streamlined, melded player in the ICS.

Charles Rogoff, co-chair of the NRT Training Committee and Director of DOT Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) grant program, spoke about the HMEP grant program. Mr. Rogoff explained that the HMEP grant program is intended to provide financial and technical assistance as well as national direction and guidance to enhance State, Territorial, Tribal, and local hazardous materials emergency planning and training. The HMEP Grant Program distributes fees collected from shippers and carriers of hazardous materials to emergency responders for hazmat training and

to Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) for hazmat planning. He also noted that the Training and Curriculum subcommittee of the National Response Team's Preparedness Committee, co-chaired by DOT and FEMA USFA, provides coordination for the HMEP grant program at the Federal level.

Mr. Rogoff discussed the progress the HMEP grant has made over the years. In particular, he emphasized that since the program's inception, approximately \$99 million has been awarded in HMEP grants, and over 1,512,000 responders and others have been trained in part thus far with these funds. The HMEP Curriculum guidelines have been distributed to grantees, LEPCs/State Emergency Response Commissions and local fire departments on a request basis (telephone (301) 447-1009 for a copy). Grantees use these guidelines to qualify courses for the list of courses mandated by Congress. Assistance is being provided to grantees in using the guidelines to qualify their courses.

He concluded with a discussion of the IAFF train-the-trainer course developed with HEMP grant money. For the past twelve years, this TTT program has successfully trained workers in the fire, police, and EMS services. The NRT was an integral component of this training.

Rod Turpin, Chief National Health and Safety Advisor of the Environmental Response Team, was the final speaker during the EPA Plenary. Mr. Turpin used a slide show of vivid pictures to guide the audience through his presentation. He discussed the EPA's approach to collaborate with IPA during emergency situations; the EPA's partnership with the Coast Guard to set up a training and response partnership, and; the lessons learned from the Missouri dioxin incident where workers learned later on in the clean up process that they could have been using a lower level of personal protective equipment. Mr. Turpin concluded his talk by noting that if training programs are not integrating the [www.wetp.org](http://www.wetp.org) sites into their programs, they are doing something wrong.

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